

Message Text

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SUBJ: INDO-BANGLADESH TALKS ON FARAKKA

1. INDIAN PRESS SEPTEMBER 7 ANNOUNCED TALKS ON FARAKKA IN NEW DELHI WITH THE ARRIVAL SEPT 7 OF SEVEN-MEMBER BDG DELEGATION HEADED BY REAR ADMIRAL M. H. KHAN, DCMLA. MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION, JAGJIVAN RAM, WILL LEAD THE INDIAN DELEGATION COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM HIS MINISTRY AND MEA.

2. RESUMPTION OF TALKS ON FARAKKA FOLLOWS RENEWAL OF GOI INVITATION SEPT 3. EXPLAINING THE INVITATION, GOI SPOKESMAN SEPT 4 SAID THAT INDIA SOUGHT TALKS "WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS" AND WAS PREPARED " TO DISCUSS AND EXAMINE, WITH AN OPEN MIND, THE PROPOSALS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH. AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE SIMILAR CONSIDERATION TO INDIA'S PROPOSALS." THE GOI SPOKESMAN ALSO CALLED FOR "A
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JOINT AND OBJECTIVE STUDY OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

BENEFICIAL USES BY THE TWO COUNTRIES (OF THE GANGES WATERS) AND OF THE EFFECTS OF FARAKKA WITHDRAWALS IN BANGLADESH."

3. IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM SEPT 1 (NEW DELHI 13056), FONSEC MEHTA OBSERVED THAT "CROSS BORDER" MOVEMENT OF THE SORT THE BDG HAD IN THE PAST COMPLAINED BOUT HAD GONE DOWN GREATLY RECENTLY SINCE THE GOI HAD TAKEN STEPS TO CONTROL SUCH ACTIVITY AND ENDED IT. ON FARAKKA, MEHTA ARGUED THAT THE EFFECT ON BANGLADESH OF INDIAN WITHDRAWAL OF WATER HAD NOT BEEN NEARLY SO SEVERE AS THE BDG BELIEVED AND THAT INDIA HAD RELEASED MORE WATER THAN BANGLADESH HAD EXPECTED IT TO.

4. COMMENT: THE DECISION OF THE GOI TO SEEK TALKS ON FARAKKA AND THE BDG'S "IMMEDIATE" ACCEPTANCE OF THE INVITATION WERE BOTH PATENTLY MADE WITH THE FORTHCOMING UNGA DEBATE ON FARAKKA IN MIND. IF THE TALKS SUCCEED OR ARE CONTINUED, DEBATE AT THE UNGA WILL HAVE BEEN PREEMPTED. IF THEY FAIL, THE GOI WILL BE HEARD TO MAINTAIN THAT BANGLADESH IS AT FAULT IN RESOLVING WHAT IS A BILATERAL DISPUTE, WHILE THE BDG PRESUMABLY WILL ARGUE THAT BECAUSE OF INDIAN INTRANSIGENCE THE ONLY FORUM AVAILABLE TO IT IS THE UN.

5. THE FONSECRETARY'S COMMENTS SUGGEST AT WORST THAT THE INDIANS ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO AT LEAST PLACE THEMSELVES IN A BETTER PUBLIC RELATIONS POSITION VIS-A-VIS BANGLADESH AND AT BEST COULD INDICATE SOME GENUINE INDIAN MOVES TO EASE THE SITUATION AT LEAST SO FAR AS THE BORDER INCIDENTS ARE CONCERNED. WE DO NOT ENVISAGE, HOWEVER, ANY SUBSTANTIVE YIELDING IN HE GOI POSITION ON THE FARAKKA WATERS THEMSELVES OR ON THE INDIAN RIGHT TO MAKE THE ULTIMATE JUDGEMENT ON WHAT IT NEEDS FOR CALCUTTA PORT VERSUS BANGLADESH REQUIREMENTS.
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